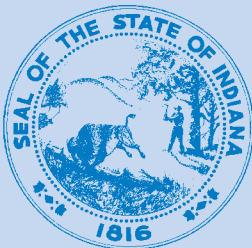


State Representative

Dennie Oxley

The 2000 Session of the Indiana Legislature



How To Reach
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Spring, 2000

Dear Friends,

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly adjourned on March 3.

We passed several significant pieces of legislation, including a plan to distribute the funds Indiana will receive from the tobacco settlement and a proposal to increase benefits for workers severely injured on the job. We also adjusted the unemployment compensation system, making improvements for both workers and employers.

I have detailed several new laws in this newsletter and have included other information that you might find useful.

In the coming months, I will be working on interim study committees. Study committees allow legislators the opportunity to explore subjects in greater depth than is permitted during the session.

Please contact my office at 1-800-382-9842 if you have questions or concerns regarding state government.

Sincerely,

Dennie Oxley



E-mail updates available on state legislative issues

Several people have indicated to me that they would like to receive e-mail updates on legislative issues and other issues important to our district. I am pleased to offer this service through my legislative office.

Simply e-mail or call my office and I will add you to this list. I am excited about the technological advances over the past few years that allow you nearly instant access to legislative news and information.

Inside this newsletter

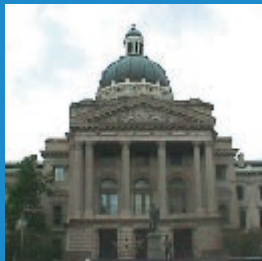
Tobacco Settlement

Helping Working Families

School Safety

Medicaid





Session News

School safety

School buses will be required to display the school or school district and its corresponding number on the back and top of the vehicles. This new requirement will make it easier to identify school buses and students in an emergency. In the case of an overturned school bus, officials will be able to identify the bus and find out where it is from in order to notify parents and locate medical information on students.

National concern about school safety played a role in passage of legislation that allows school security plans to remain confidential. The legislation also provides that school boards may meet in private to discuss the assessment, design and implementation of school safety and security measures.

The General Assembly addressed parent concerns about the Indiana High School Athletic Association through legislation that creates a panel to review appeals of rulings made by the IHSAA.

The panel will consist of parents, high school principals, and athletic directors.

Legislature allocates tobacco funds

Bi-partisan agreement to help several programs and groups

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was passage of legislation that sets up a system to allocate the more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The funds will be used for health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for senior citizens on low incomes who have trouble affording their prescriptions.

Of primary importance to me in evaluating the proposals for this money was taking advantage of the opportunity to have an impact on public health. While the legislature has always attempted to be sensitive to health care problems, we had a unique opportunity to address them this year, and I feel confident that through this legislation, we have ensured a healthier future for the citizens of Indiana.



Rep. Oxley sang the opening prayer on the final day of session.

Settlement will help rural Indiana and family farms

The national tobacco settlement legislation approved this session provides a framework to help rural Indiana and farmers who grow the product. While no money was appropriated to help in these two areas, the final bill does create a fund that eventually will dedicate assistance to areas of the state that will suffer economically through the loss of tobacco production.

Funding for the Tobacco Farmers and Rural Community Impact Fund will be used to help transition tobacco farmers into crops other than tobacco. Funding will also be used to develop new agricultural enterprises in those cities and towns, including facilities for research and development, new market opportunities, educational and leadership development programs and direct financial assistance. These efforts are steps toward preserving and maintaining Indiana family farms and farmland.

Senior citizens will also see benefits

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, they won't have to make that decision.

The final version of the tobacco settlement bill includes \$20 million to help seniors on low incomes purchase prescription drugs. While we are still working on the details of this program, I would be happy to add you to our mailing list if you call me and express an interest.

Inventory tax cuts greater than expected

Inventory tax cuts enacted by members of the Indiana General Assembly will provide more relief than originally anticipated for farm and small business owners across the state.

When we passed these cuts during the 1999 legislative session, savings were estimated at more than \$80 million in both 2000 and 2001. Now it appears those estimates were low, and the actual savings will be more than \$210 million in both years. This means that many Hoosiers will see even smaller tax bills in the years ahead.

In the 1999 session, legislators approved a plan that provided a credit for property taxes paid in the first \$12,500 of assessed valuation on personal property, including inventory, mobile homes and farm and manufacturing equipment.

By enacting this credit and assuring it covers both equipment and inventory, we eliminated inventory taxes for nearly 90 percent of the businesses and farms in Indiana. The inventory tax cut is just one part of what is now more than \$1.5 billion in tax relief for the people of Indiana.

Helping working men and women

Legislators have approved measures that will make substantial changes in coverage for workers who are injured on the job and improve benefits for those people who have consequently lost their jobs.

Around 90 percent of Indiana workers who receive a disabling injury in a workplace accident will see their compensation increase close to 50%. There are improvements in the one-time cash payments made to a person who suffers a permanent partial impairment in a workplace accident. The change will help any worker determined to have up to the 30th degree of impairment, which includes around 90% of all injured employees. Weekly disability payments will also increase.

Efforts to bring high-tech jobs to Indiana

Efforts to upgrade the state's programs to attract more research and development jobs received support from the Legislature this session.

In November, we approved a bill that extends the life of tax credits for research and development and gives local governments more flexibility to grant abatements for new research equipment.

This legislation was adopted in an effort to convince our college graduates to stay in the state after getting out of school.

Cemetery reforms continue

In 1999, the Indiana General Assembly began the process of reforming the state's cemetery laws to provide a more accurate idea of where unmarked burial grounds are located so they could be adequately preserved. Those efforts resumed during the 2000 session with passage of a proposal that will require the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to supervise an effort to survey and record all cemeteries and burial grounds.

The law also requires any person who sells land that contains a cemetery must disclose its location on a property deed.



Session News

Medicaid

Currently, Indiana requires that a person suffer from a life-long disability in order to receive Medicaid Disability assistance.

The General Assembly approved legislation that would replace the life-long requirement with a four-year requirement.

Indiana has the most restrictive Medicaid Disability definition in the nation. Forty-eight other states require that a person suffer from a disability for one year.

Insurance

I am pleased to announce that legislation enacted this session will go a long way toward increasing insurance coverage for a number of individuals.

One change involving dental health maintenance organizations will mandate that licensed dentists be in charge of making decisions about dental claims.

Other legislation requires HMOs to cover patients for colorectal cancer testing based on standards established by the American Cancer Society.



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*See inside to add your name
to my e-mail update group*

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State legislative web site

The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items. The main site at www.state.in.us offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at www.state.in.us/R73 and explore various items related to the legislature.

A new feature on my web site will allow you to request various House publications. We currently offer publications specifically designed for senior citizens, grade-school children, and high school students in the process of choosing a college. Other publications give a general overview of various Indiana state agencies and advise how to avoid being the victim of a scam.

You may also request booklets by calling my legislative office at 1-800-382-9842.



A screen shot of my legislative home page

Top Five State Web Sites*

1. State Job Bank
2. Hoosier Lottery Homepage
3. Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Search
4. General Assembly homepage
5. Dept. of Environmental Management homepage

*Based on number of visitors as of February 25, 2000